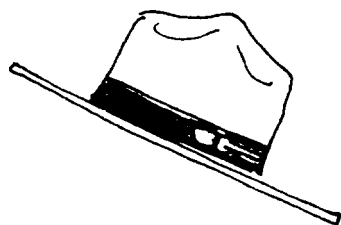


Fee Demonstration Program

Badlands National Park
South Dakota

What is your money doing for this park?



There is one thing that all visitors to Badlands National Park have in common: They each own a part of the future. A \$10 entrance fee re-commits you and your family to the conservation of a litany of resources: 43 million years of Earth’s history, the finest remnant of mixedgrass prairie, the most endangered land mammal, bison, 64,250 acres of wilderness, natural quiet, clean air, and the growth of Oglala Lakota economy. Is it worth it?

History of Fee Collection in the National Park Service and Badlands National Park



The collection of admission and recreational use fees in the National Park System actually predates the 1916 establishment of the agency. In 1915, seven parks had independently initiated fee collection. By 1917, auto fee revenues for all parks totaled approximately \$91,000.

In the ensuing years, the collection of admission fees for national parks has been an ongoing administrative and Congressional debate. Since 1918, fee receipts have become part of the General Treasury fund. The National Park Service (NPS) has at different times collected or not collected fees at its park units, each time adjusting to the restrictions of the collection legislation and allocation process. At times this has led to a confusing relationship between park entrance gates and the American public. From 1965 – 1995, there was little correlation between the collection of a park fee and the allocation of money to that location.

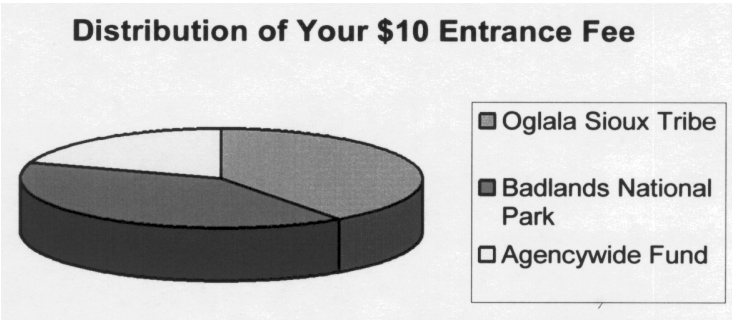
All units of the NPS watched as visitation increased but revenues did not increase to support this trend. The Badlands story mirrored the national experience. Each year, maintenance, education, and resource management projects at Badlands went undone because of lack of funding. Uniquely, in 1976 Badlands established a partnership with the Oglala Sioux Tribe, sharing lands and splitting entrance fees. Badlands is the only National Park in such a relationship with an American Indian Nation. 50% of the entrance fees collected here at Badlands are transferred to the Oglala Sioux Tribe for resource management and recreation projects. In exchange, the NPS co-manages the South Unit of Badlands National Park with the Tribe.

History and Purpose of the Fee Demonstration Program



With recognition of the problem and to address fiscal needs, in 1996 Congress established the Recreational Fee Demonstration Program with its stated purpose *“to demonstrate the feasibility of user-generated cost recovery for the operation and maintenance of recreation areas or sites and habitat enhancement projects on Federal lands”*.

As part of this “pilot program,” individual parks will keep 80% of the money generated from entrance fees for use on specific, approved projects. Badlands National Park’s relationship with the Oglala Sioux Tribe is a unique arrangement. The Tribe receives between \$500,000 and \$1 million from the Park each year with an equal amount retained at the park level to support the agency mission and visitor needs.



Accomplishments of the Fee Demonstration Program at Badlands

Restrooms: One of the things that we may not think about when we flush in a National Park is that many of these areas are miles away from sewage disposal systems more common in populated areas. The number one question at the Ben Reifel Visitor Center is “Where’s the bathroom?” Visitors to National Parks have real needs. The park’s existing sewage lagoon was designed in the 1950s when park visitation was less than 300,000 per year. It was also designed with a clay liner that leaks and is not appropriate for Badlands’ stratigraphy. It is grossly inadequate for current visitor levels and will become unusable within the next decade, if not sooner. *Your money at work:*

- ☞ Paid for an Environmental Assessment for a new environmentally sustainable Sewage Lagoon
- ☞ Purchase and installation of vault toilets at the Door/Window Trail and Fossil Exhibit Trail

Conserving Fossil Resources: Badlands National Park was established to conserve the most significant land mammal fossil deposits in the United States. Sadly, much of the geologic science of the park has gone unfunded. Fee Demonstration dollars were combined with a Canon Corporation Expedition into the Parks Grant to re-open the Big Pig Dig for excavation and education purposes. *Your money at work:*

- ☞ Paid a seasonal Physical Sciences Technician to supervise the “Pig Dig”
- ☞ Purchased supplies and materials for the summer season dig. These fossils are being catalogued, studied and interpreted helping children and visitors learn about the past.
- ☞ Funded three John C. Clark Paleo-Education Intern to provide onsite education to visitors

Informed Visitors: Prior to 2000, visitors to Badlands National Park found exhibits at overlooks but little in the way of current information or safety assistance. Badlands purchased and installed bulletin boards throughout the park to insure that you could have a safe and enjoyable visit - even after hours. *Your money at work:*

- ☞ Twelve bulletin boards have been installed at key overlooks and trailheads throughout the park to provide orientation and safety information to you before you set out into the Badlands.
- ☞ A youth work crew provided through the recruitment efforts of the Student Conservation Association convened in the park in July, 1999 to install the bulletin boards. Entrance dollars covered the costs of recruiting, transporting, feeding, and supervising a crew of six high school students from across the country for their three week experience in the park, as well as provide an environmental education field trip at the end of their work project.

The Bang for Your Bucks: 2000 Uses for Fee Dollars

- The following projects have been funded for completion in 2000:
- ☞ **Badlands in Your Classroom Enrichment Program:** This outreach program now reaches over 8,500 students, up from 5,000 using your entrance dollars, within 100 miles of the park each year. The program has been expanded to a longer season each year and has been expanded to our website.
 - ☞ **Interpreting Lakota Culture at the White River Visitor Center:** This visitor center on the South Unit will be staffed by NPS rangers. Media will be improved to better educate about the resources of the South Unit.
 - ☞ **Restoration of the Bighorn Sheep:** A native species, the reintroduction of bighorn sheep at the Cedar Pass area will be continued and potentially expanded to other areas in the park.
 - ☞ **Demonstration of Mixed Grass Prairie Ecosystem:** Over 1000 acres of prairie will be burned to study the impacts fire has on the restoration of native plant species and the reduction of noxious weeds, such as Canada thistle.
 - ☞ **Improvement of the Door and Cliff Shelf Nature Trails**

Beyond the Dollars

Consumer Reports has described visiting America’s National Parks “a best buy.” Make the most of your visit to Badlands. Become a wise, satisfied consumer. Ask yourself *Is it worth it?* Be sure to make your fee worthwhile. Camp, hike, learn, study, rest, relax, listen to the quiet, take a drive, picnic at sunset, let the landscape move you, take it all in, and come back again and again. We will be here, waiting for your return. **For more information on Badlands National Park, visit our website at <http://www.nps.gov/badl>**